Catherine Campbell. Museum Migrations: An Analysis of Information Seeking Desires Toward Active Pursuits of Knowledge. A Master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2004. 42 pages. Advisor: David Carr.

Museums, cannot merely present information to their patrons. In order for visitors to gain knowledge effectively, institutions must enable them to become actively involved in the learning process. In order to assist their visitors in seeking such knowledge, a museum must first recognize the types of information that appeal to them.

This study explores the types of interests created by an exhibition, by questioning individuals visiting Sebastião Salgado's exhibition, "Migration: Humanity in Transition," at the Ackland Art Museum. Based on this data, the study proposes techniques, which may be further implemented to aid visitors in pursuing such interests. The study will also assist in bringing museums and libraries together, not only by providing visitors with a bibliography of related materials, but also by examining potential collaborative efforts.

Headings:

Museums
Museums -- educational aspects
Museums -- evaluation
Museums -- exhibits and displays
Museums -- planning
Museum-library relations

MUSEUM MIGRATIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION-SEEKING DESIRES TOWARD ACTIVE PURSUITS OF KNOWLEDGE.

by
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of the School of Information and Library Science
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Approved by:

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David Carr

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INTRODUCTION

In his 1944 work, *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey explains that, "Education is not an affair of telling or being told but an active and constructive process."[1] Such an insightful statement is especially meaningful for the museum community. Museums, as well as all cultural institutions, cannot merely present information to their users. In order for visitors to gain knowledge effectively, institutions must enable them to become actively involved in the learning process. In recent decades the need for such constructive learning has been realized as museums increasingly incorporate interactive experiences into exhibitions and develop supplementary programming.

While effective within the museum, such methods may not typically encourage users to continue the active learning process outside of the institution. If learning is to continue beyond the museum, it may be useful to investigate techniques to aid the visitor to develop the knowledge and interest base created by the exhibitions. This study will explore the types of interests created by an exhibition. In order to assist their visitors in learning, a museum must first recognize the types of information that appeal to them. The study will also assist in bringing museums and libraries together by providing visitors with a bibliography of related materials.

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[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1944), 41.

Museums have been recognized as the most popular cultural institutions visited by Americans. According to the American Association of Museums (AAM), museum attendance grew by over two hundred million visitors in the 1990s.[2] Forty percent of today's museums were built after 1970, further illustrating the increasing public demand for such institutions.[3] As Americans continue to swarm to museums, these important institutions must work harder to appreciate and educate the diversity of individuals present within their exhibitions. Such efforts are clear in increasing visitor surveys and evaluations. Museums have begun to examine what visitors want, how they learn, and where they come from. They use this information to make exhibitions more entertaining and more educational.

The increased focus on education is evident within intensified AAM accreditation standards, which require enhanced educational programming. The school field trip is an established aspect of the museum community. While today over $193 million is still spent nationwide on school programs, increased attention has been placed on non-school programs. Today about eighty percent of museums have developed programming for the independent learner and the family audience.[4] Such newly developed methods include interactive exhibitions, discovery rooms, demonstration centers, lectures, and theater programs.

Once again, however, little progress has been made in encouraging visitors to continue the active learning process beyond the museum environment. While museums often question visitors about what type of exhibitions they would like to see, they rarely inquire about what visitors might like to know more about following the experience of

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[2] Bonnie Pitman, "Muses, Museums, and Memories." *Daedalus* 128 (Summer 1999): 1.
[3] Ibid, 11.
[4] Ibid, 16-17.

visiting an exhibition. Therefore, a study such as this is useful to the future development of such independent learning programs. The study specifically asks, what kinds of information are museum visitors likely to want after seeing Sebastião Salgado's photography exhibition, "Migrations: Humanity in Transition?"

Such data is beneficial to museums in understanding what information is useful to its users. In order to provide visitors with the tools needed to actively learn outside the museum, they must first establish what visitors want to learn more about. With an accurate understanding of user needs, they may begin to encourage visitors to enhance their information-seeking behaviors. Such behaviors will produce more informed museum audiences; thereby, improving the museum environment as a whole.

This study also attempts to build connections between the museum environment and the library. As Cheryl Bartholow points out in a 1999 *Museum News* article, museums and libraries have much in common. "Both house and display valuable objects and documents relating to art, history, natural history, and science. Both develop educational programs for and provide access to research and scholarly collections. Both work with local school systems to educate the younger members of society."[5] Museums and libraries must take advantage of such similarities, in order to enhance the learning experiences of their users. Congress encouraged such collaboration in 1996, when it transformed the Institute of Museum Services into the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). In 1998, IMLS awarded the first National Leadership awards to institutions modeling such innovative collaborative efforts.[6]

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[5] Cheryl Bartholow, "The Brooklyn Expedition: A Case Study in Collaboration," *Museum News* 78 (March/April 1999): 36.

[6] Diane Frankel, "IMLS: In support of Museums and Libraries," *Museum News* 78 (March/April 1999): 42.

While such measures are increasing throughout the nation, museums and libraries must continue to encourage patrons to actively learn from both types of institutions. This study promotes such learning by reminding visitors that the myriad of questions racing through their mind as they walk through an exhibition (Who is Sebastião Salgado? What kinds of lighting did he use? How can I help the individuals depicted in the photography?) can be answered. Where? At the library!

Overall, by examining information-seeking behaviors of visitors viewing the Sebastião Salgado exhibition, "Migrations: Humanity in Transition," at the Ackland Art Museum, this study will demonstrate the need for the increased promotion of independent learning. It will address the need John Dewey spoke of by encouraging museum users to actively pursue greater knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As national interest in museums grows, so does the literature being produced about these cultural institutions. A plethora of material has been written in recent years, covering an array of topics related to the museum community. While the material is diverse in its scope and content, much is important to the development of this study. Visitors are at the heart of this study, just as they are core to any important and influential writing about museums. The following reviews have been organized by the topics they represent: evaluation, learning and information seeking, and collaborative efforts.

Evaluation

As mentioned earlier, museums have increasingly become concerned with evaluating themselves and their ability to meet the needs of their users. Many writers have responded by creating texts outlining how to perform effective evaluations. Three important pieces include, Judy Diamond's *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums & Other Informal Educational Settings*, Lynn D. Dierking and Wendy Pollock's *Questioning Assumptions: An Introduction to Front-End Studies in Museums*, and Beverly Serrell's *Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions*.

Judy Diamond's work is very effective in explaining the various stages of an evaluation project. It is an excellent source for individuals or institutions unfamiliar with such practices. Diamond provides a step-by-step approach, beginning with the evaluation proposal. She carefully describes the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods and analyzes how each can benefit specific needs of an institution. Diamond

also effectively discusses not only how to select subjects, but also how to protect those subjects' rights.

Diamond's description of observational tools is extremely useful, as it provides example forms and methods that can easily be adapted to a variety of institutions. Such methods include counting heads, tracking movements, and recording observations and behaviors. Diamond then provides guidelines for performing interviews and preparing questionnaires. This section proved to be very valuable to the development of the questionnaire used in this study. Diamond contrasts structured, semi-structured, and open-ended interview methods, enabling the reader to determine which technique best meets their needs. For this study it was determined that a combination of methods would produce a questionnaire that could both generally determine the interests of the visitors, as well as specifically identify significant reading materials.

Diamond also discusses ways museums can measure learning. While these methods do not apply well to an art museum, and therefore to this study, they are useful to history and science museums attempting to convey specific concepts to their users. Such methods can determine if certain ideas are being accurately presented or if exhibition techniques need to be altered. Diamond concludes with information about how to analyze and present data, as well as how to evaluate the evaluation, in order to create more useful studies in the future.

Diamond successfully illustrates not only how to perform effective museum evaluations, but also why such evaluations are important to the continued success of an institution. She focuses on the concept of informal learning, explaining why museums must understand and appreciate the type of education they provide. She quotes Jeremy

Roschelle, writing in *Public Institutions for Personal Learning*, a publication of the American Association of Museums.

> Dramatic conceptual change is a slow, unpredictable, and difficult process. It is thus inappropriate to expect deep conceptual change to occur predictably, in a single or short series of visits [to a museum exhibition]. Conversely, when deep conceptual change does occur, it will almost certainly involve resources beyond the museum's control such as books, videos, science kits, classes, clubs, and so forth.[7]

Such a statement has a significant impact on this study. Why do museums not put these necessary resources within their control? If learning cannot take place within the institution alone, the institution must aid the learner in searching for and obtaining the materials needed to produce a "deep conceptual change." This study hopes to aid in enhancing the informal learning Diamond speaks of, both inside and outside of the museum.

Another important text related to museum evaluation is *Questioning Assumptions: An Introduction to Front-End Studies in Museums* by Lynn D. Dierking and Wendy Pollock. Dierking, Associate Director of the Institute for Learning Innovation, has performed many front-end studies. Pollock has been managing exhibitions and programs for the Association of Science-Technology Centers for over twenty years.

They begin first by not only explaining what a front-end study is, but also what a museum exhibition is. They discuss the importance of exhibits as means of communication. Their research focuses on the science museum environment, but can be applied to many cultural institutions. The text is organized much like Judy Diamond's work, with each step of the evaluation process outlined and described. The authors

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[7] Judy Diamond, *Practical Evaluation Guide: Tools for Museums & Other Informal Educational Settings* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1999), p. 31.

emphasize the need to carefully define the goals and objectives of the study before beginning. Without identifying these goals, the evaluator cannot successfully determine the best evaluation method.

Dierking and Pollock also emphasize the need to be aware of assumptions made about visitors. They explain that museums often attempt to predict visitor interests. They caution against making such assumptions, explaining that it often leads to the development of mundane, "safe" exhibitions. Museums should not be afraid to challenge visitors and perhaps create new interests among museum users. The Ackland Art Museum clearly works to challenge their visitors with exhibitions like Sebastião Salgado's "Migration: Humanity in Transition." It is not a topic pleasing to anyone, but an important issue to present and examine. This study takes Dierking and Pollock's concept a step further by insisting that museums encourage visitors to actively pursue knowledge, rather than assuming that an exhibition answers more questions than it creates.

The remainder of the work discusses in detail the process of organizing, designing, implementing, and interpreting a front-end study. The authors describe many of the same research methods discussed by Judy Diamond. Unlike Diamond, Dierking and Pollock include two very useful appendices. The first includes profiles of more than forty front-end studies performed within museums. Each profile provides the name and location of the institution being studied, the names of those conducting the study, the purpose of the study, the methods used, and a brief summary of the findings. These profiles are very useful in comparing institutional goals and appropriate research methods. The second appendix lists organizations and journals useful to individuals

performing such studies. The mailing address, telephone number, and web address of each organization is included, making it easy for evaluators to contact these associations to receive assistance.

Finally, Beverly Serrell's *Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions* is an excellent source to examine when developing a museum evaluation of any sort. The text began as a paper, published in 1990, which examined visitor behavior in the taxonomic Hall of Birds at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Through this study and an evaluation performed in 1991 of the traveling exhibition, "Darkened Waters: Profile of an Oil Spill," Beverly Serrell created "the 51% solution." Serrell uses this 51% criterion to determine the effectiveness of museum exhibits. She uses questions such as, "Do 51% of the visitors move at a rate of less than 300 square feet per minute? Do 51% or more of the visitors stop at 51% or more of the exhibit elements? Can 51% of a random sample of cued visitors immediately after viewing the exhibition, express general or specific attitudes or concepts that are related to the exhibition's content objectives?"[8]

While Serrell's work is more concerned with identifying immediate effectiveness within exhibitions (not an issue of direct interest within this study), it is still important in developing an understanding of how visitors move through exhibitions. Facts such as, visitors tend to turn right and follow the right-hand wall through a gallery, few people move into the center to explore island exhibits, and exhibit elements near the entrance receive more attention than those at the end, are useful in analyzing visitor interests.[9]

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[8] Beverly Serrell, *Paying Attention: Visitors and Museum Exhibitions* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998), p. 2.

[9] Ibid, 9.

Such interests may be increased or decreased by that topic's positioning within the exhibition.

Overall, texts regarding evaluation proved to be quite valuable. Their discussion of learning methods and styles produced knowledge of how visitors seek information within museums and how their interests are affected by exhibitions. This information provided a good foundation for expanding learning beyond the museum. Once one can effectively evaluate and understand learning within the museum, they may begin to expand the identified museum behaviors into effective independent learning behaviors.

Learning & Information-Seeking

Of more direct importance, the following resources examining how and why people learn and gather information. Such works are obviously abundant within the fields of education and psychology, much of the following literature focuses on learning within the museum, however. The authors carefully apply established educational theories to the museum environment.

The first text, edited by Gail Durbin, entitled, *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, contains a variety of articles written by museum professionals from both the United Kingdom and the United States. The majority of the material was originally published elsewhere, but is complied here to present a perspective on museum learning. Articles by Lynn D. Dierking outline historical and contemporary theories of learning. She effectively describes the development of learning theories. She begins with behaviorists, such as Pavlov, and describes how they perceived learning in a very scientific way. "The behaviorists developed an associational notion of learning: there is a

stimulus that the learner perceives, and then over time a series of associations with that stimulus and a certain response, the material, concept, or fact is learned."[10] Behaviorists suggest that in order to teach a learner the information should be broken down into smaller skills and concepts. Behaviorism does not, however, allow for differences within these hierarchies of information. Thereby, not accommodating unique ways of learning or perceiving information.

Dierking proceeds to discuss developmental psychology. She specifically addresses Jean Piaget's stages of cognitive development: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage. She explains that these concepts are especially useful in training docents to work with children. In addition, developmental psychology theories have led to increased interactive experiences within exhibits, as museum professionals begin to understand the need for active learning.

Dierking also examines cognitive theories of learning. Cognitive theory combines many of the elements of behaviorism and developmental theory, explaining each step of the information-gathering process. Cognitive scientists emphasize the importance of prior knowledge and experience in measuring how much a person can learn. They do not, however, account for prior attitudes or beliefs. Cognitive theories have lead museum educators to develop more programs dealing with how to use a museum, in an attempt to teach the visitor how to learn.

Dierking explains that while these traditional theories have enhanced museum educators' understanding of learning, they are not easily applied to the learning that takes

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[10] Lynn D. Dierking, "Historical Survey of Theories of Learning," in *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, ed. Gail Durbin (London: The Stationery Office, 1996), p.21.

place within a museum. New theories, which emphasize the importance of memory, context, and individual differences, have had a more dramatic impact on how museums present information.

Many museums test visitors' short-term memory by testing their ability to retain information after leaving an exhibit. Dierking explains that this may not be the most effective use of memory. "Although it may be interesting to know what aspects of the museum visitors can describe as he or she exits, it would seem that what is really important is which of these recollections will persist in memory long enough to be used another day."[11] Such a point is of special interest to this study. Not only is what visitors can remember important, but also what questions and interests remain within them long after they leave the museum. It is these interests that should be nurtured and encouraged to grow.

The idea of context is also influential to this study. Dierking describes four spheres of context: personal, social, physical, and immediate activity. The latter two apply more to learning within the museum. Personal and social context are important, however, in understanding one's experiences and attitudes related to specific topics. Such contexts affect how one processes the content and what interests or impacts he or she the most.

Another important piece within the Durbin text is George E. Hein's article, "Constructivist Learning Theory." This well organized piece lists nine essential principles of learning and the meaning each has for the museum community. Point 8, which explains that learning requires time and reflection, is most important to this study.

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[11] Lynn D. Dierking, "Contemporary Theories of Learning," in *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, ed. Gail Durbin (London: The Stationery Office, 1996), p.26.

Hein's concerns related to this principle ask many of the same questions that this study addresses.

> Finally there is the issue of the time to learn, time to reflect, and time to revisit an idea. Museum educators have grappled with this problem and find it a particularly challenging one, since our audiences are free to come and go, and large fractions of them are tourists who may never return. Museum galleries are not designed to as places to linger, despite our desire to have visitors spend more time there…What do we do for the visitors who wish to stay with a topic longer? How have we organized museums to accommodate them? To what extent have we provided additional resources (in addition to the items we are eager to sell them in the nearby shop) that can satisfy the interested visitors concerns that arise the next day or a week after the visit?[12]

Clearly, Durbin's collection is useful in understanding the learning process and how it impacts museum visitors. The title itself emphasizes the need to examine the information seeking behaviors of museum users. In order to create exhibitions of lifelong learning, we must examine not only how visitors learn within the museum, but also how those learning experiences impact visitors' learning processes and interests in their life outside the museum. Other texts, focused more generally on exhibitions as a whole, such as Michael Belcher's *Exhibitions in Museums* and David Dean's *Museum Exhibition: Theory and Practice*, also address these topics and discuss learning theories, but not in the detailed manner in which the Durbin work does.

Finally, *Seeking Meaning: A Process Approach to Library and Information Services*, by Carol Collier Kuhlthau, effectively explains the principles of learning and information seeking. While the text is intended to address a library community, as place that provides information, the museum environment certainly fits into the models she presents. Kuhlthau successfully analyzes the learning process by examining the work of

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[12] George E. Hein, "Constructivist Learning Theory," in *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Lifelong Learning*, ed. Gail Durbin (London: The Stationery Office, 1996), p.34.

John Dewey, George Kelly, and Jerome Bruner. She carefully defines each phase of learning process as it presented by each theorist.

The phases and concepts illustrated by Dewey best fit the museum setting. His phases of reflective thinking include: suggestion, intellectualization, guiding idea, reasoning, and action. The initial phases can occur within the museum as ideas are presented and interpreted. The final phase, and according to Dewey the most important phase, often occurs only upon extended exposure to a concept. In order for one to test the ideas presented they must often actively pursue other sources of information. Visitors often begin the learning process at the museum, but are rarely encouraged to actively continue the progression of such learning, apart from the offerings in a museum bookshop.

Much of Kuhlthau's work is spent discussing a series of five studies of library users in the process of information seeking. The first is a small, qualitative study using high school seniors. Two are larger studies, used to verify the model of the information search process. The final studies are longitudinal, using the same students from the first study. While these studies more directly relate to libraries, they are important in understanding the manner in which individuals seek information. In order to encourage the active pursuit of knowledge, museums must be aware of how visitors will seek this information.

The studies within Kuhlthau's work emphasize anxiety and uncertainty among library users. The museum user has these same anxieties and uncertainties. When being questioned during this study, visitors often had difficulty initially expressing their interests and concerns related to the exhibition. However, once they began to

communicate their ideas or once others within their group began expressing their thoughts, they often could not be stopped. Questions triggered by the exhibition flowed, once their anxiety over having questions ceased. Kuhlthau's work illustrates the need for both library and museum professionals to work to reduce these anxieties and encourage users to ask questions and seek greater knowledge.

Overall, these resources clearly explain relevant situations for learning and information seeking. Such concepts are key to both this study and museums in general. Museums are institutions created for the people who visit them. Therefore, understanding the information seeking behaviors of these individuals is crucial to the success of a museum. Furthermore, understanding these behaviors will enable museums to promote future learning outside of the institution.

Collaborative Efforts

This study hopes to demonstrate the need for museums and libraries to increase their collaborative efforts. These institutions can work together to support the information gathering needs and desires of their users. The article alluded to earlier by Cheryl Bartholow is one of a series in *Museum News*, describing recent collaborative efforts. The articles are useful in fully understanding how libraries and museums can take advantage of their similarities. Individuals who were intimately involved in the collaboration wrote each piece. Bartholow, the director of programs at Brooklyn's Children's Museum, examines collaborative efforts in Brooklyn. Kim Huber, the Library Services and Technology curator, and Dale Steele, the head of reference at the Arizona Department of Library, Archives, and Public Records, assess collaborations between a

variety of cultural institutions in Arizona. Finally, Cheryl McCallum, the director of education at the Houston Children's Museum, explores the collboration between her institution and the Houston's public library.

The "Brooklyn Expedition," discussed in Bartholow's piece, created a website that brought together the collections of Brooklyn's public library, art museum, and children's museum. They wanted to create a resource that would build the visual, research, and technological skills of young people. The site was set up as an expedition, with a journal, site map, and graphic elements reminiscent of a journey. They hired an interactive web designer to make the website similar to a real museum visit. They hope the project will encourage users to make actual visits to each institution.

While the project benefits children, families, and teachers in a variety of ways, Deborah Swartz, the vice president for education and programs at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, explains that the greatest benefits have been for the institutions involved in the collaboration. "The opportunity to work with colleagues on a long-term project developing connections and a comfort level with each other—that knowledge and trust—will have a long term impact on us. It has already changed how we think about each other, and the way we are planning to work together in the future."[13]

The state of Arizona has also embarked on a variety of collaborative projects between their archives, libraries, and museums. One such endeavor is the Cultural Inventory Project, which is working to produce a central listing of descriptions of the collections in Arizona's museums, libraries, and archives. Another project incorporates not only libraries and museums within Arizona, but also the state libraries of Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

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[13] Bartholow, *Brooklyn Expedition*, 58.

Huber and Steele explain that this program, called the Five State American Indian Project, is intended to, "Institutionalize statewide and regional communication networks among museums, archives, libraries, and tribal communities so they can address issues on an ongoing basis. Ensure that tribes know what technical, funding, training, and other resources are available to them and help them obtain access to these resources. And help tribes when they deem it appropriate, to preserve their cultural materials and make them available to the public."[14] The Heard Museum, already known for its collaboration with Native American groups, is the project's advisor and fiscal agent. Participants are pleased with the increased access to information and the ability to better serve the public. Clearly, the efforts have been successful in providing increased knowledge to patrons and visitors.

The collaborative efforts in Houston hope to produce similar results. The Houston Public Library and the Houston Children's Museum have joined forces to create the Library for Early Childhood. The public library consolidated their existing resources on parenting, child development, and family learning to create a center, based at the children's museum, where the materials could be easily accessed by parents and caregivers. They hired a librarian with a background in child development, elementary teaching, parental counseling, and library science in order to ensure that materials were accurately presented to patrons. The library was effectively designed to provide information, such as children's books, for youngsters on the bottom shelves. Books for older children are on the middle shelves and the remaining upper shelves are filled with books, videos, and periodicals for the parents. The library and museum effectively

[14] Kim Huber and Dale Steele, "Preserving Arizona, Providing Access," *Museum News* 78 (March/April 1999): 40.

pooled their expertise and resources to create an environment beneficial to parents and children alike.

The InfoZone at the Children's Museum of Indianapolis is another terrific example of a similar collaboration. The InfoZone is also a library within the children's museum, used to educate and introduce children to the abundant tools and resources available within a public library. InfoZone opened in December 2000. According to the Indianapolis-Marion County Library,

> Visitors may access information from web sites and databases; reserve books, kits and other resources to be picked up later. Traditional library services are also provided to neighborhood residents who want a library within walking distance. They may browse through the collection and check out books for educational or recreational reading, or they may sit and read, use a laptop computer provided, or listen to a story in a special "read-aloud" area. Library staff are on hand to assist.[15]

Such collaboration should be implemented between more museums and libraries nationwide. Museums encourage visitors to ask questions, yet they typically do not provide them with materials with which they could answer these questions. Libraries within museums would support the actively learning process within visitors. As individuals exit galleries filled with new interests and concerns, they could easily proceed into an adjacent library containing information relevant to their needs. In working with the library the collection could be continually altered to match the topics within changing exhibitions. They could leave the museum the same day with many of their answers in hand. Of course such a venture would produce complications, such as how to deal with tourists and returns. Within appropriate planning, however, such an endeavor could be successfully implemented within many communities.

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[15] "InfoZone." [Available Online] Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library [cited April, 2004]; Available from http://www.imcpl.lib.in.us/tcm.htm.

Resources related to museums, museum visitors, learning, information seeking, and collaborative efforts proved to be very valuable in preparing and planning for this study. Clearly, many within the museum community are concerned with their ability to teach visitors. This study hopes to begin to address such issues.

METHOD

This study will focus specifically on the information seeking behaviors of Ackland Art Museum visitors viewing Sebastião Salgado's exhibition, "Migrations: Humanity in Transition." The Ackland Art Museum, which housed the exhibition from February 1, 2004 to March 28, 2004, is located within the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The exhibition displayed over three hundred photographs taken during Salgado's six-year journey. He followed mass migrations through over forty countries to document the plight of those forced to travel between various refugee camps and urban slums. The images are stunning; they fill observers, simultaneously, with amazement and sorrow.

As visitors exited the exhibition they were asked to answer a few questions related to their experience. The questions focused on the visitors' information seeking desires. The initial questions, used primarily to relax patrons, obtained a general description of the personal impact the exhibition had on the individual. Secondly, participants were asked to identify types of information they might seek regarding the exhibition. Finally, visitors, after examining a short bibliography, were asked to choose three citations, which appealed most to their interests. They were able to take a copy of the bibliography with them as they departed.

Condensing a lengthy list of citations prepared by Dr. David Carr's INLS 224, Humanities and Social Sciences Reference course created the bibliography. Members of the class were asked to view the exhibition and then find three resources related to the exhibition that they believed would be useful to an adult learner. Their citations and appropriate commentaries were provided anonymously. By using these citations, an

array of perspectives and insights could be used to create the foundation for a more balanced bibliography.

Obviously, however, the list had to be condensed. First, duplicates were removed. The remaining citations were grouped into specific categories based on topic, region, or both. These groupings were then placed in larger classifications, depicting broader topics. Within these larger categories items were eliminated based on the year of publication, the type of material, the abundance of sources with similar themes, and the opinions provided by the individuals suggesting the citation.

Eventually, the list was reduced to twenty items, including books, articles, websites, and videos. The items were grouped into four main categories (Migration & Refugees, Violence & Conflict, Photographers & Photography, and Politics & Urbanization). These categories were used to assist the participants in easily locating items that matched their needs and interests. While the full bibliographic citation was given, the title was highlighted in red, again to assist the participant in locating relevant materials.

The questionnaire was presented orally, except for the independent reading of the bibliography, and the questioner recorded the responses of the participant. Thirty museum visitors were questioned. All participants were adults, over the age of eighteen. Other than this, neither age, gender, race, nor religion determined who participated in the study. Participants were merely chosen based on who was present in the gallery during the time of inquiry. As a questionnaire was completed, the next available visitor was approached. Therefore, no inclusion or exclusion criterion was used within the pool of available visitors on a given day. The only requirement was that they had viewed the

Salgado exhibition. Placing the questioner at the exit of the gallery ensured that such a requirement was met. (A more extensive survey would have sampled more systematically over a longer period, but it was determined that this small sample was fitting for the current project.)

No inducement was given for participation, although the aforementioned bibliography may provide added value to the exhibition. Any visitor could decline to participate, without affecting their experience or treatment within the museum. The Ackland Art Museum fully understood and complied with the study. The questionnaire and bibliography used for this study can be found on pages 27-29.

Once all the data had been collected, the responses were synthesized and analyzed. First the citation totals were tallied. A total for each citation and for each category of citations was computed. This was by far the simplest and most quantitative analysis. Analyzing the responses to the first questions proved to be much more difficult. Clearly, the exhibition sparked an array of interests within visitors. Eventually the responses were categorized into broad classifications, but sub classifications were also used to illustrate the full meaning behind each individual's specific interest(s). For example, many participants expressed concern over current events, but the regions of precise interest varied.

Analyzing images of specific interest provided similar difficulties. Many explained that they were most fascinated with the photographs of children. Responses varied, however, regarding not only particular images of interest, but also specific elements within such images. In addition, the reasons each participant expressed for being drawn toward these photographs varied. Clearly, each individual had a unique

experience within the museum. It is important, therefore, for the museum to encourage active, independent learning, thereby enabling each individual to pursue his or her very specific interests and concerns.

Questionnaire

My name is Cathy Campbell. I am a graduate student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As part of my thesis research I am examining information seeking behaviors of patrons at the Ackland Art Museum. Specifically, I am interested in reactions and responses to the Sebastião Salgado/Migrations exhibit. May I have just a few minutes of your time?

1) Did you find the exhibit interesting, stimulating, thought provoking, motivating, enlightened? Which pieces were most important to you?

2) After viewing the exhibit, what types of things would you like to know more about? If you were in a library right now, what further information would you seek to gain?

3) From this list of citations, which three items would you consider reading first after viewing the Salgado exhibit?

Please keep this list of potential reading material. Thanks for all your help!

Resources Related to the Sebastião Salgado/Migrations Exhibit

Migration & Refugees

1. Lewis, G.J. ***Human Migration: A Geographical Perspective***. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982.

2. Nam, Charles B.; Serrow, William J.; Sly, David F. ***International Handbook on Internal Migration***. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

3. ***World Refugee Survey: An Annual Assessment of Conditions Affecting Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Internally displaced Persons***. 2003 ed. New York: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 2003.

4. ***U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR)***. http://www.refugees.org

5. ***International Organization for Migration***. http://www.iom.int

Violence & Conflict

6. Arnold, Guy. ***Historical Dictionary of Civil Wars in Africa***. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999.

7. Chayes, Antonia., Minow, Martha L. ***Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Conflict***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

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DATA

Participants described their experience in the exhibition in a variety of ways. Some borrowed words suggested to them, such as stimulating, interesting, and thought provoking. Others used unique words to describe their experience. The exhibition was described as alarming, moving, depressing, upsetting, overwhelming, informative, astonishing, sad, beautiful, shocking, disturbing, and mesmerizing. Many individuals used contrasting terms with the conjunctions and or but, such as, upsetting and motivating, sad but beautiful, and moving and informative. This illustrates the ambiguity created by Salgado and the exhibition.

Contrast is clearly a key element within the photography, and one that had a definite impact on visitors. Many emotions are expressed through the photographs, ranging from compassion to anger. Several participants noted that they were most struck with smiles on subjects' faces, shining through the hardships. Likewise, the contrasting scenery impacted viewers. Of particular interest were images depicting both scenes of the city and the neighboring countryside, vibrant cities resting near horrible slums. These photographs seemed to remind visitors of the clear division between the "have and have-nots" throughout the world. Considering such evident contrasts within Salgado's photography, it is very appropriate that he employs the use of black and white film. The black and white images enhance the disparity presented throughout the photography.

In addition to the use of contrast, participants also showed a great deal of interest in images of children. Twelve of the thirty patrons questioned identified images with children as those of having the most importance to them. (See Figure 1) Five of the twelve participants selected images of orphanages. The image of orphans on a roof in

Brazil was of special interest. Many noted that the details evident in the young face had a particularly strong impact on them. One participant explained that she was most affected by an image of two boys, who appeared to be the same age as her sons. She examined the photograph at length, considering how different their life experiences have been, and probably would continue to be.

It was often evident, as the literature indicated, that one's personal experiences impacted their impression of the exhibition. Some participants had visited the areas photographed and contrasted their experiences with that of Salgado. They often chose images from the regions they visited as those most important to them, because they were most relevant to their past experiences and prior knowledge. Other participants were photographers themselves and were most impacted by photographic elements of particular pieces.

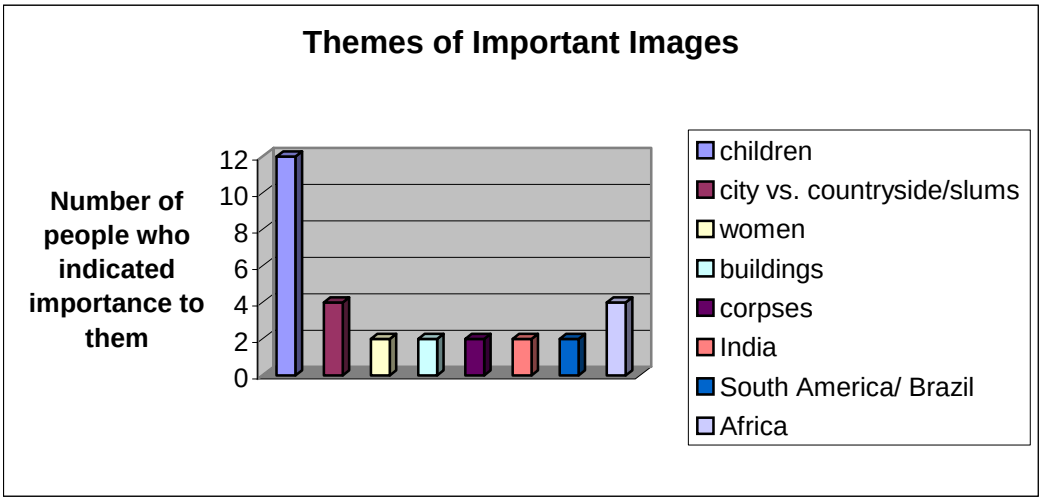

Figure 1: Themes of images identified as important by museum visitors.

When asked what types of information they would seek to gain regarding the exhibition, visitors often paused to contemplate the question. Most were still so

overwhelmed by the photography they had not had an opportunity to identify the questions and concerns they now had. Participants seemed pleased to have an opportunity to express these newly discovered interests. Once they identified one, they often felt compelled to identify several more. Therefore, the data below represents more than thirty responses.

The most popular interest identified was that related to the problems and current events within the regions photographed. (See Figure 2) Many were curious to know if any changes or improvements have been made since the photographs were taken in the 1990s. They also wanted to know more about what specifically was going on in each area. They wanted more to the story than a photograph could capture.

Many participants also identified a desire to know more about the history of the regions presented. They were curious to learn how the history of these nations may have caused or influenced the events of today. Participants wanted background knowledge, because many admitted they new little about the regions or the problems which exist there. Participants typically indicated the areas in which they were already knowledgeable and selected topics that were new and undiscovered as those they would seek to gain information about. This was not always true, however, for photographers who wanted to learn more about the art of photography and improve their skills.

Four individuals indicated that they would like to know more about photography in general, while seven participants revealed they were interested in Salgado himself. (See Figure 2) Their interests were in his skills as photographer, his background and training, his funding, and his journey and personal experiences.

Four participants wanted to know more about migrations and the experiences of refugees. (See Figure 2) Visitors were interested in hearing stories of individual journeys and experiences. They were drawn to the people in the photographs and wanted to know more about the individuals themselves. Similarly, a couple of participants expressed a desire to learn more about the cultures of the regions. Clearly, the lifestyles of those photographed differed greatly from those viewing the exhibition. Visitors showed an interest in better understanding those differences.

Surprisingly, only two individuals displayed an interest in gaining information about how to help improve the situation depicted in the photography. (See Figure 2) Perhaps this is a result of the overwhelming nature of the photographs. Many visitors may want to first obtain a basic understanding of the problems themselves, before embarking on any rescue or assistance efforts.

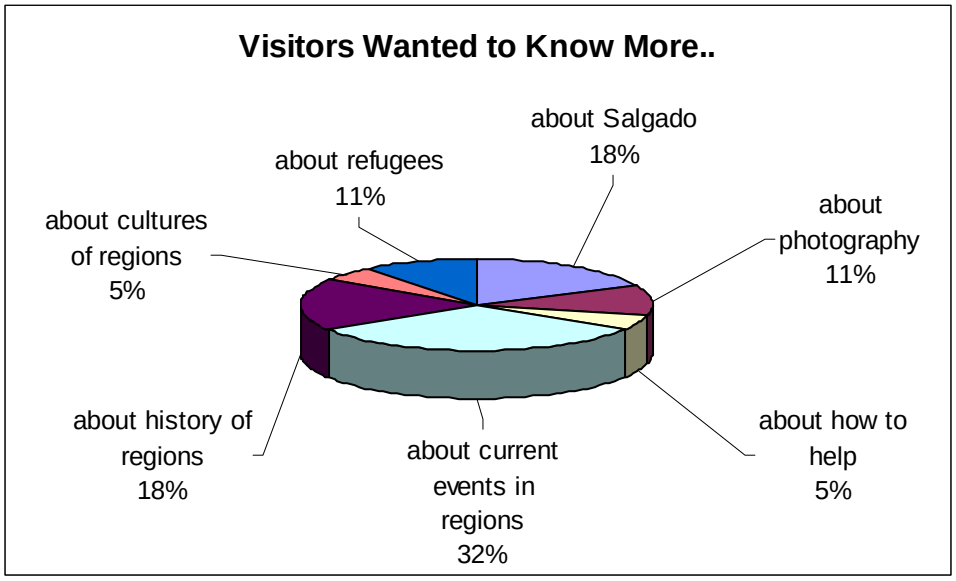

Figure 2: The topics visitors identified as interesting and worth gaining further information about.

After identifying these general areas of interest, participants selected citations, which more specifically identified the types of information they would like to obtain. Eleven individuals selected *The Spectre of Hope*, a film presenting a conversation between Sebastião Salgado and British art-critic, John Berger. (See Figure 3) The film addresses both the creation of "Migrations: Humanity in Transition" and the issues raised by the photography. This selection represents visitors desires to learn more about Salgado and his experiences.

The second most popular resource was G.J. Lewis's *Human Migration: A Geographical Perspective*. Nine participants expressed interest in examining this text. (See Figure 3) This selection represents a need within the community to learn more about the general issue of migration. Since many visitors prior knowledge of the topic was weak, they saw the book a means of creating a foundation on which to build and gain more specific interests.

The next title of significant interest was, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda*. Eight participants displayed an interest in this resource. This is appropriate considering Rwanda was a region heavily dealt with within the exhibition. The dramatic title may have also influenced participants' selection. The title certainly attracts interest and curiosity.

The Impact of War on Children: a review of progress since the 1996 United Nations Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children received seven requests from visitors. Once again, this citation represents an area of strong interest—children. The images of children clearly had a significant impact on visitors. It produced a need in them to learn more about these young subjects.

Building Sustainable Urban Settlements: Approaches and Case Studies in the Developing World also received seven acknowledgements of interest. (See Figure 3) Several participants displayed interest in the cities, slums, and buildings shown in the photographs. This text may respond to many of their concerns bout the living conditions within those regions. Likewise, five participants selected *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes*. Only two individuals selected a similar text, *Slums and Urbanization*. This may be due to the varying dates of publication. The latter was published in 1991; the others were published in 2001 and 2003, respectively. Individuals tend to seek the most current information. In addition, the 1991 text would have been written prior to Salgado's journey and may be considered less relevant.

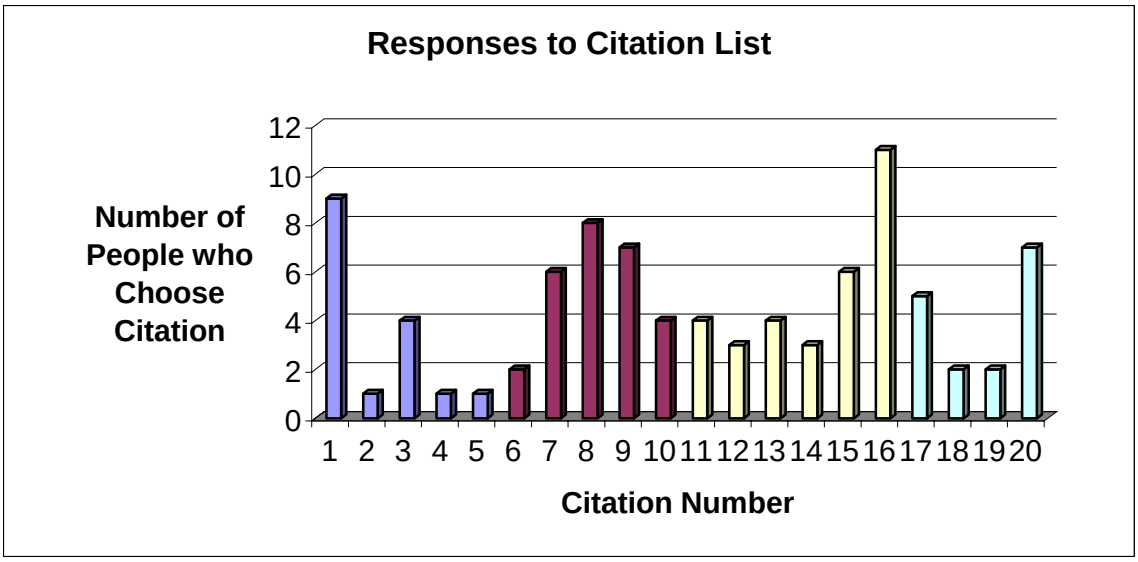

Figure 3: Number of people who responded to each citation within the supplied bibliography. The varying colors represent the four categories of information.

Overall, the photographers and photography category received the greatest amount of interest. (See Figure 4) This is due to the interest visitors had in both Salgado and his art form. This also may be a result of the number of photographers questioned,

who wanted to learn more about their hobby or profession. Resources related to violence and conflict were also popular. This may be due to the dramatic impact many graphic images had on visitors. After witnessing the tragic outcomes of such conflict, people needed to understand more about the causes of violence in these regions.

Finally, resources related to migration and refugees and politics and urbanization received equal attention. (See Figure 4) The themes within these sources appear to overlap more than those in other categories. This may have resulted in the declined interest. While a participant, for example, may be willing to read three books about photography (one on lighting, one on photojournalism, and one about Salgado), they may be less likely to read three books on urbanization.

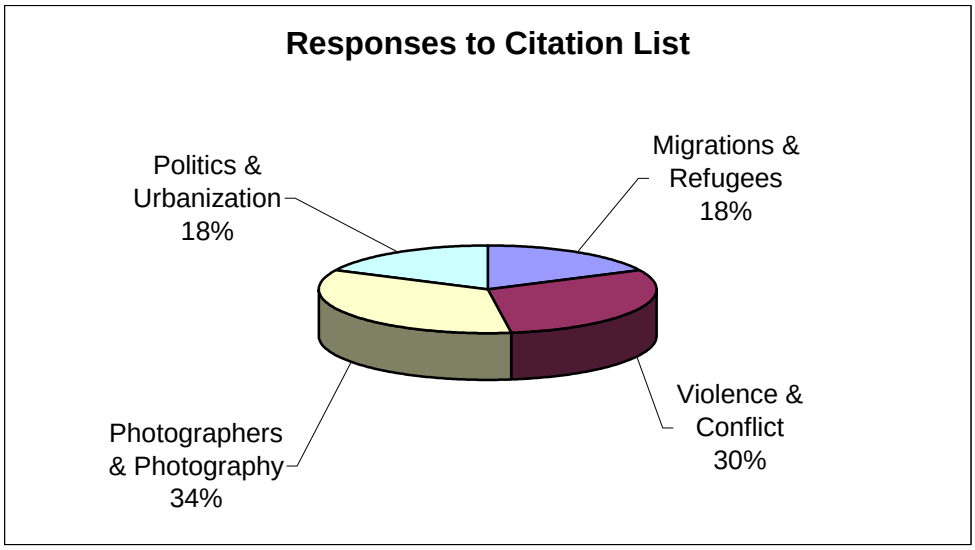

Figure 4: Percent of responses within each citation category.

ANALYSIS

In reflecting on his journey Sebastião Salgado wrote, "Everywhere I traveled the impact of the information revolution could be felt. Barely a half-century ago, the world could say it 'did not know' about the Holocaust. Today information—or at least the illusion of information—is available to everyone."[16] Why then, Salgado questions, do the horrors of the world still remain? Perhaps it is a result of the inability of individuals to actively pursue knowledge. While the massacres in Rwanda flash across television screens, the interests created are not promoted or supported.

Salgado admits that he does not have the answers. What he does have, however, are the questions. Salgado's photographs place important questions in the minds of his viewers. It is the museum's job to encourage visitors to pursue answers to these questions, thereby establishing a meaningful spread of information. By viewing the exhibition, museum users learn what has happened. Further, independent investigations, however, can reveal how it happened, why it happened, and whom, specifically, it happened to.

The data collected within this study reveals the abundant interests created by Sebastião Salgado's exhibition, "Migrations: Humanity in Transition." It clearly identifies the kinds of information museum visitors desired after viewing the exhibit. While an array of interests were expressed, there were topics of significant appeal, such as children, photography, and current events. Understanding the questions and concerns created by such an exhibition can aid museums in developing programs, which can support visitors in actively seeking greater knowledge.

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[16] Sebastião Salgado, *Migrations: Humanity in Transition* (New York: Aperture, 2000), p. 10.

Salgado's intention, by creating such an exhibition, was to not only inform individuals about the situation, but also to encourage change. Therefore, museum professionals may be disheartened by the lack of interest in wanting to help. Once again, however, this represents the need for more active learning. Dewey would explain that the act of assisting these regions and individuals could only come once the reflective learning process has been complete. By not encouraging visitors to complete this process, museums are hampering their ability to make a difference. Only a fully informed individual can truly enact change.

This study could be further implemented in the future by testing visitor interests prior to an exhibition opening. Subjects could be shown materials from an exhibition, within the planning stage, and asked, after viewing the pieces, what they would like to know more about. With such information in hand, museums could work with libraries within their community to present collections related to these interests. By making such pieces of information more easily available, visitors would be more likely to actively pursue it. In addition, museums could use such data about what information is useful to users, to create information stations within exhibitions. Such stations could display web pages of relevant organizations and list not only the types of resources that may fulfill their needs, but also where such resources can be found.

A long-term goal of such endeavors would be the creation of a library within a museum. As discussed earlier, this would be a lengthy process, but one worth exploring. Not only would it encourage museum visitors to actively pursue greater knowledge, it would force them to return to the institution, hopefully creating a cycle of continued learning within and outside of the museum.

The Ackland Art Museum, for example, could provide such services, at least for those within the university community. A library filled with books about Rwandan refugees and civil wars in Africa would have supplied relevant information to many visitors of Sebastião Salgado's exhibition. While a university library system does hold many of these texts, immediate access to such materials would more effectively promote active learning among visitors.

While museums can learn a great deal from such research, visitors can also learn much from such a study. It enables them to better understand how and why they seek information. By understanding this, they can ask better questions, thereby, more constructively gaining knowledge. Such a study may also encourage individuals to more actively pursue information of interest. It is hoped that at least one of the thirty participants carried their bibliography with them to the library and perused the shelves for relevant materials. Perhaps an important continuation of this study would involve tracking participants' information seeking behaviors once they left the museum. Did they attempt to actively learn more? If so, were they successful in obtaining the information needed to complete the learning process? Provision of a simple bibliography could stimulate new information seeking.

Overall, much can be learned from this initial study of information seeking desires of museum visitors. Types of information interests of visitors at the Sebastião Salgado were identified. More importantly, however, an understanding of why these interests were created was established and a foundation was set for further investigation. This study hopes to encourage museums, and all cultural institutions, to promote the

active pursuit of knowledge within their visitors and patrons. By supporting interests created within exhibitions such efforts can be achieved.

Jane Porter once said, "Imparting knowledge is only lighting other men's candles at our lamp, without depriving ourselves of any flame."[17] Museums, as informal educators, must not only light the lamps, but also continually keep them burning by supporting the search of knowledge within and outside their institutions. With such efforts, the world, and its pupils, will shine brighter.

[17] Carolyn Warner, ed., *Treasury of Women's Quotations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 81.

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